UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.3/1997/15/Add.1
12 December 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

STATISTICAL COMMISSION
Twenty-ninth session
10-14 February 1997
Item 11 (b) of the provisional agenda*

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL STATISTICS: DEMOGRAPHIC, SOCIAL AND MIGRATION STATISTICS

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

SUMMARY

This addendum serves as an executive summary of the "Draft revised recommendations on statistics of international migration" (PROVISIONAL ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/58/Rev.1), which are before the Commission at its present session. The information provided herein will be incorporated in the final version of the recommendations.

* E/CN.3/1997/1.

96-36344 (E) 080197

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INTRODUCTION

1. Since 1976, when the United Nations adopted the current set of recommendations on statistics of international migration,[1] the worldwide importance of international migration flows has increased markedly, with the result that international migration issues have gained prominence, not only on the international agenda but on many national agendas as well. All countries have experienced some degree of international migration and the evidence available suggests that the number of countries that are the source or destination of sizeable migrant outflows or inflows has been rising. Yet, despite the growing importance of international migration and the concerns it raises, the statistics necessary to characterize migration flows, monitor changes over time and provide Governments with a solid basis for the formulation and implementation of policy are often lacking. Recognizing the need to improve international migration statistics, the United Nations Statistical Commission, at its twenty-seventh session, in 1993, requested that the current recommendations on statistics of international migration be reviewed.[2] The United Nations Statistics Division and the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat) carried out such a review jointly, in cooperation with the United Nations regional commissions and other interested organizations. The resulting "Draft revised recommendations on statistics of international migration" (PROVISIONAL ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/58/Rev.1) was produced in collaboration with the United Nations Population Division. The full review process is outlined below.

I. PROCESS OF REVIEW OF THE 1976 RECOMMENDATIONS

2. In order to review the current recommendations on international migration statistics,[1] Eurostat carried out a series of important activities and considered their outcome at meetings of the Working Party on Migration held in Luxembourg in December 1993, November 1994 and January 1996.

3. A study on the concepts and definitions used to characterize international migration flows and stocks by States members of the European Union (EU), the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) was carried out using a special questionnaire exploring in detail the extent to which the definitions used by different data sources matched those included in the current recommendations on statistics of international migration.[1] The questionnaire was sent by Eurostat to States members of EU and EFTA and by ECE to its member States early in 1994. Responses were received and analysed by Eurostat. In addition, the staff of Eurostat and of the United Nations Statistics Division consulted with ECE, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and other relevant organizations to obtain their views. The possibility of expanding the review process to include the countries covered by the other United Nations regional commissions was explored.

4. With the assistance of consultants, Eurostat also carried out a study on national practices and definitions relating to the characterization of the stock and flow of international migrants and a study on the definitions relating to refugees and asylum-seekers used by data sources. Both studies pertained to EU and EFTA member States.[3] Further work was undertaken by the United Nations Statistics Division on the compilation of stock data on international migrants in other regions.

5. To obtain the views of Government experts and international organizations on the compilation of refugee and asylum statistics, an Informal Meeting on Refugee and Asylum Statistics in Europe and North America was held at Geneva from 15 to 17 May 1995. The Meeting, organized jointly by Eurostat and UNHCR, discussed proposals for the collection and consolidation of statistics on refugees and asylum-seekers as well as the interrelationships of those statistics with international migration statistics.

6. In addition, the United Nations Statistics Division and Eurostat organized jointly an Expert Group Meeting on International Migration Statistics, which was held in New York from 10 to 14 July 1995. The Expert Group considered, inter alia, the findings of various studies undertaken as part of the review process. The conclusions of the Expert Group[4] were a key input for the preparation of draft proposals for the revision of the recommendations on statistics of international migration.

7. To discuss the framework for the compilation and reporting of statistics on international migration flows, an Inter-Agency Consultative Meeting on International Migration Statistics was convened in Luxembourg from 28 to 30 May 1996. The Meeting was attended by representatives of Eurostat, ILO, OECD, UNHCR, the United Nations Population Division and the United Nations Statistics Division. On the basis of the discussions held at that Meeting, the Statistics Division, in collaboration with the Population Division, prepared a consolidated draft of the recommendations on international migration statistics, which was circulated among selected Governments and discussed at the joint ECE/Eurostat work session on migration statistics held at Geneva from 30 September to 2 October 1996. The work session was attended by representatives of 29 States members of ECE and by representatives of OECD, UNHCR, and the United Nations Statistics Division. The comments received from Governments and the discussions held at the ECE/Eurostat work session were taken into account in revising the draft recommendations for submission to the Statistical Commission at its present session.

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAFT REVISED RECOMMENDATIONS ON STATISTICS OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

8. The report (PROVISIONAL ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/58/Rev.1) sets forth revised recommendations on statistics of international migrant flows and on the measurement of stocks relevant to the study of international migration. After reviewing the current state of flow statistics on international migration and the evidence available regarding the degree of implementation of the 1976 recommendations, the report introduces a set of improved definitions for the purpose of gathering information on international migration flows. The

definitions rely on the concept of country of usual residence and distinguish between long-term and short-term migrants. The definitions adopted are as follows:

Country of usual residence: The country in which a person lives, that is, the country in which he or she has a dwelling where he or she normally spends the daily period of rest. Temporary travel abroad for purposes of recreation, holiday, visits to friends and relatives, business, medical treatment or religious pilgrimage does not change a person's country of usual residence.

Long-term migrant: A person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year (12 months), so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence. From the perspective of the country of departure the person will be a long-term emigrant and from that of the country of arrival the person will be a long-term immigrant.

Short-term migrant: A person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of less than a year (12 months) except in cases where the movement to that country is for purposes of recreation, holiday, visits to friends and relatives, business, medical treatment or religious pilgrimage. For purposes of international migration statistics the country of usual residence of short-term migrants is considered to be the country of destination during the period they spend in it.

9. In contrast with the 1976 recommendations, these definitions of long-term and short-term migrants are more straightforward and easier to understand. Furthermore they rely on the concept of residence to distinguish international migrants from other international travellers. In addition, the new recommendations define as long-term migrants persons who stay in the new country of usual residence for at least a year instead of including only those persons staying for over a year as the 1976 recommendations did. The corresponding change is made in the duration of stay identifying short-term migrants and this category is expanded to include persons moving internationally for reasons other than those identifying visitors according to the recommendations on tourism statistics.[5] Lastly, the new definitions avoid explicit reference to the method that is to be used to ascertain that a change of country of usual residence has taken place and, by forgoing any mention of the intentions of the migrants involved, implicitly allow the use of various approaches to determine that a change of country of usual residence has occurred.

10. The revised definitions of long-term and short-term migrants are accompanied by a revised taxonomy of inflows and outflows of internationally mobile individuals that uses citizenship as the organizing variable (see chap. II, sect. A of the draft revised recommendations). A review of the major types of data sources yielding statistics on international migration flows reveals that some data sources focus exclusively on the international flows of foreigners while others deal exclusively with the international movements of citizens, thus supporting the use of citizenship as an organizing variable. The review of data sources also documents the various ways in which the concept of "change of country of usual residence" can be operationalized and suggests

approaches to improve the comparability of the data obtained (see chap. II, sect. B of the draft revised recommendations).

11. A major premise underlying the present recommendations is that implementation of the revised definitions by existing statistical systems will occur gradually. Consequently, it is important in the meantime to have a means of integrating the varied information available so as to obtain as comprehensive and transparent a picture as possible of human international mobility. To do so, a framework for reporting statistical information relevant for the study of international migration is proposed. The framework builds upon the taxonomy of inflows and outflows of international travellers presented in chapter II of the draft revised recommendations and gives priority to the identification of internationally mobile individuals who satisfy the general definition of long-term and short-term migrants. Because few countries are able to obtain all the information required about international migration flows from a single data source, it is one of the goals of the framework to promote the utilization of as many data sources as possible so as to provide information about various types of international migrants. By providing a standardized way of organizing the statistical information produced by different sources, the framework is expected to facilitate an assessment of data comparability and thus foster change.

12. The framework is maximal, in the sense that it includes all major categories of persons crossing international borders and, for all categories that may be relevant for the measurement of international migration, calls for the presentation of data classified by duration of stay (or absence) so as to allow the identification of long-term and short-term migrants. To increase flexibility, the framework allows for the use of different approaches to determine duration of stay and thus facilitates the appropriate interpretation and use of the data it presents. The framework consists of six tables for the reporting of data on various types of international population movements occurring over a year. The first table of the framework is used to compile information on flows of non-migrants, meaning all persons who are not either long-term migrant or short-term migrants. The other tables record information on different categories of international migrants, that is, persons who are either long-term or short-term migrants according to the definitions presented in paragraph 8 above. The information relating to persons who are foreigners or citizens with respect to the country recording the data is presented separately to accommodate the inclusion of statistics gathered by systems that cover only one of those groups. In addition, allowance is made for the possible changes of status of foreigners. The use of each table of the framework is discussed in chapter III of the draft revised recommendations.

13. Chapter IV focuses on the type of information needed to characterize international migrants in ways that are useful for the analysis of the dynamics of international migration. Section A identifies the core variables that are relevant for the characterization of all types of international migrants and discusses how they should be measured. It also discusses variables that are specific to the major groups of international migrants covered by each of the tables of the framework. Particular attention is given to variables relevant for the study of the economic activity of international migrants who work or who are intending to work while abroad, including their occupation, industry and status in employment. Given the importance of labour migration in several

regions of the world, inclusion of such variables is judged to be necessary for analysis purposes. However, because of the difficulties involved in ensuring that those data are of sufficient quality, doubts have been expressed about their usefulness. After describing the different variables of interest, a set of recommended tabulations is presented and their degree of priority is indicated.

14. In recognition of the fact that there are certain categories of internationally mobile persons whose particular situation requires special treatment, chapter V of the draft revised recommendations is devoted to the compilation of information on asylum-seekers. Given the importance of their numbers and the complexity of the systems in place to adjudicate asylum applications, special recommendations are made about the types of tabulations needed to assess the impact of this part of the internationally mobile population on the more general international migration process.

15. Lastly, chapter VI of the draft revised recommendations addresses the issue of measuring stocks related to the study of international migration. From a technical perspective, to be compatible with the definition of long-term migrant proposed in paragraph 8 above, the stock of international migrants should include all persons who have ever changed their country of usual residence, that is, persons who have spent at least one year of their lives in a country other than the one in which they live at a particular point in time. However, many of the concerns related to international migration are citizenship specific, particularly because foreigners and citizens do not necessarily have equal social, economic or political rights and responsibilities. In addition, integration issues relate to persons who have not been part of a country's population since birth. Consequently, for the study of the impact of international migration, two subpopulations are the focus of interest: (a) that of foreigners living in a country; and (b) that of persons born in a country other than the one in which they live (the foreign-born). The foreign population of a country is defined as all persons who have that country as country of usual residence and who are the citizens of another country. The foreign-born population of a country includes all persons who have that country as the country of usual residence and whose place of birth is located in another country. Chapter VI describes the data collection systems that are the most common sources of information on the foreign or the foreign-born population, discusses the information required from foreigners or the foreign-born and presents a list of recommended tabulations on each of those populations as well as on the total population of a country jointly classified by country of birth and country of citizenship. The recommendations made in chapter VI regarding the collection of information on country of birth and country of citizenship by censuses are consistent with those made in the "Draft revised principles and recommendations for population and housing censuses" (PROVISIONAL ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/67/Rev.1).

III. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

16. The Statistical Commission may wish to address:

(a) The revised definitions of long-term and short-term migrants;

(b) The framework for the compilation of statistics of international migration;

(c) Whether information on occupation, industry and status in employment, in the case of international migrants (both long-term and short-term) exercising an economic activity in the receiving State, should be considered as core variables.

Notes

[1] Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Statistical Papers, Series M, No. 58 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.79.XVII.18).

[2] Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1993, Supplement No. 6 (E/1993/26), para. 129 (d).

[3] See Michel Poulain, Marc Debuisson and Thierry Eggerickx, "Projet d'harmonisation des statistiques de migration internationale au sein de la Communauté européenne", Rapports nationaux, Catholic University of Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, n.d., mimeographed; Richard Gisser and Michel Poulain, "Migration statistics for EFTA countries: report presented to the Working Party on Demographic Statistics, 26-28 February 1992" (Doc E3/SD/12/92), Eurostat, Luxembourg; and Asylum-seekers and Refugees: A Statistical Report, vols. 1 and 2 (Luxembourg, Eurostat, 1994).

[4] Statistical Division of the United Nations and Statistical Office of the European Communities, "Final Report of the Expert Group Meeting on International Migration Statistics, New York, 10-14 July 1995" (ESA/STAT/AC/50/9).

[5] Recommendations on Tourism Statistics, Statistical Papers, Series M, No. 83 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.XVII.6).